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SUBJECT: CALDERON NAMES FERNANDO FRANCISCO GOMEZ MONT NEW  
SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In an early morning press conference November 10, President Calderon named Fernando Francisco Gomez Mont to replace Juan Camilo Mouriño, who perished in last week's jet crash in Mexico City. Gomez Mont is hailed by many in his party as a solid pick, who will help knit PAN together as a cohesive party while advancing president Calderon's political and security agenda. Some commentators, however, immediately questioned whether baggage he accumulated as a private lawyer might undermine his effectiveness. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Son of one of the party's founders, Gomez Mont is a longtime PAN activist who has managed to keep a low political profile while taking on high profile legal cases. He became an active PAN partisan as an adolescent shortly after his father's death. In the early 1990s, he was a Federal Deputy, a party representative in Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute and a member of the PAN Central Committee. He left that post in 1995 to found his own law firm. His prior work in the party and government suggest a technocratic and reformist bent: while in congress in the early 1990s, he worked legal reform issues, authoring several criminal law and public security reform bills. He was also instrumental in crafting a reform of how Mexican Supreme Court justices were selected in 1994, giving Mexico's Senate responsibility for choosing among a slate of three candidates presented by the President.

¶3. (SBU) Analysts contacted by poloffs on November 10 said they expected him to carve out a prominent role advancing Calderon's reform package in Congress, drawing heavily on his own expertise and that of recently appointed presidential domestic security advisor, Jorge Tello.

¶4. (SBU) Our contacts also agreed the pick was probably also designed to bring the party in the advent of legislative elections next year. While it is not wracked by the kind of intense factionalism that has undermined the opposition PRD in recent months, PAN remains a party divided. The replacement of former party president Manuel Espino by Calderon loyalist German Martinez has not galvanized the party faithful so far. Recent electoral losses have accentuated party bickering to the extent that President Calderon used a party memorial to Mouriño on November 9 as an occasion to chastise PAN members for their divisions.

¶5. (SBU) Gomez Mont is in his mid-forties but close to a PAN generation that Fox had antagonized during his term and Calderon had ignored up until now. It is comprised of old-guard PANistas who feel they've been disrespected by upstarts in recent years after building the party base in the 1980s and 1990s and positioning it for victory in 2000. They represent a fairly sizable block in the party and their

support is needed if PAN is to pull together and minimize further electoral losses in the near term.

¶6. (SBU) Some observers here noted the widespread business interests he has accumulated over his years in private practice, as well as his reputation for representing controversial clients may undermine his overall effectiveness. The new SEGOB defended Carlos and Raul Salinas, as well as Rogelio Montemeyor, an ex-director of PEMEX who was implicated in the misuse of union funds in the late 1990s. One analyst we spoke with said while his business ties and client list won't undermine his effectiveness among members of Mexico's political class he'll need to work with as SEGOB, they may subject him to a certain amount of second-guessing in the media.

¶7. (SBU) Most say Gomez Mont's cross-party ties will serve him well. He developed strong PRI contact base as a legal reform advisor to President Ernesto Zedillo in the late 1990s, and he works well with mainstream PRD members, said one of our contacts. Most important, he harbors no presidential ambitions (at least at this juncture) and won't likely draw the fire that Mouriño did from elements in the political class seeking to weaken possible competitors well before 2012.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Calderon obviously wants a smart, but detached party loyalist to sharpen the legal and law enforcement reform; Gomez Mont's ability to reach out across cross-party ties to get things done suggest he may also serve as an effective politico who can work congress and issues

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related to upcoming legislative elections.

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